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SUBJECT: SECRETARY KREPS' VISIT TO BERLIN

1. SPEECH PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY JUANITA M. KREPS,
SECRETARY OF COMMERCE, BERLIN, APRIL 13, 1978.

THE OIL PRICE REVOLUTION OF 1973 AND THE RECESSION OF
1974-75 DEALT THE WORLD ECONOMY ITS SHARPEST ECONOMIC
REVERSAL SINCE THE 1930'S. FOR FIVE YEARS, THE OIL-
IMPORTING NATIONS--INCLUDING THE ECONOMICALLY ADVANCED
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OECD COUNTRIES--HAVE BEEN TRYING TO REGAIN THE PACE OF
ECONOMIC GROWTH AND TO REDUCE UNACCEPTABLY HIGH RATES OF
INFLATION.

THESE PROBLEMS CAN BE OVERCOME ONLY IF WE JOIN IN OUR
EFFORTS. RESTRAINING INFLATION IS IMPORTANT TO THE
CONTINUATION OF WORLD ECONOMIC RECOVERY. BUT WE NEED TO
BE MINDFUL THAT UNDUE RESTRICTIONS ON GROWTH HAVE THEIR
OWN INFLATIONARY IMPACT, DEPRIVING ALL OF US OF INVESTMENT

NEEDED TO RAISE PRODUCTIVITY AND JOBS NEEDED FOR A GROWING WORK FORCE. IN ESSENCE, WE MUST PERFORM A BALANCING ACT.

THE UNITED STATES BEGAN TAKING STEPS TO STIMULATE THE

ECONOMY SEVERAL YEARS AGO. FURTHER STEPS WERE TAKEN LAST YEAR BY THE NEW ADMINISTRATION. AS A RESULT, OUR NATION HAS ENJOYED RELATIVELY RAPID REAL GNP GROWTH: 6 PERCENT IN 1976, 5 PERCENT IN 1977. THE PRODUCTIVITY GAINS THAT ACCOMPANIED RECOVERY HELPED TO SLOW OUR INFLATION RATE FROM 9.5 PERCENT IN 1975 TO 6 PERCENT IN 1977.

MEANWHILE, THE ECONOMY GENERATED NEW JOBS IN UNPRECEDENTED NUMBERS, AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE DECLINED FROM 8.5 PERCENT FOR THE YEAR 1975 TO ROUGHLY 6 PERCENT IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1978. THIS REDUCTION WAS THE MORE REMARKABLE BECAUSE IT TOOK PLACE WHILE THE LABOR FORCE WAS EXPANDING AT A RECORD PACE.

OTHER ECONOMIES HAVE EXPERIENCED WEAKER RECOVERIES. WHILE INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION IN THE UNITED STATES BY THE END OF LAST YEAR WAS 5.6 PERCENT ABOVE ITS PRERECESSION PEAK, IT WAS LESS THAN ONE PERCENT HIGHER IN THE OTHER SIX MAJOR
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OECD COUNTRIES. EVEN IN GERMANY, WHICH HAS DONE BETTER THAN OTHER WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION WAS ONLY 3.2 PERCENT ABOVE THE PREVIOUS HIGH.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE RELATIVELY STRONG RECOVERY IN THE UNITED STATES HAS NOT BEEN TROUBLE-FREE. THE MOST NOTABLE DIFFICULTY RESULTING FROM OUR GROWTH HAS BEEN OUR LARGE TRADE DEFICIT. RAPIDLY RISING IMPORTS HAVE RESULTED FROM OUR GROWTH, WHILE RELATIVELY LACKLUSTER FOREIGN MARKETS HAVE HELD DOWN OUR EXPORTS. AND AS ONE WOULD EXPECT, THE SHARP TURNAROUND IN OUR TRADE BALANCE, FROM A RECORD SURPLUS OF 9 BILLION DOLLARS IN 1975 TO A RECORD DEFICIT OF 31 BILLION DOLLARS IN 1977, HAS BEEN FOLLOWED BY DEPRECIATION OF THE DOLLAR AGAINST SOME (THOUGH NOT ALL) CURRENCIES.

BECAUSE OF THE RECENT CONTROVERSY OVER THE U.S. TRADE IMBALANCE AND THE DOLLAR'S EXCHANGE RATE, I SHOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS SOME OF THE DIMENSIONS OF THE CURRENT U.S. SITUATION. LET ME BEGIN WITH OUR IMPORTS AND THE OBVIOUS KEY TO OUR IMPORT PROBLEM, NAMELY OIL.

WHEN THIS DECADE BEGAN, THE UNITED STATES WAS IMPORTING LESS THAN 15 PERCENT OF THE OIL IT CONSUMED. BUT DOMESTIC PRODUCTION OF CRUDE OIL AND NATURAL GAS BEGAN TO DECLINE

AFTER 1970. BETWEEN 1972 AND 1977, IT DROPPED 13 PERCENT.

TO SUBSTITUTE FOR LOST PRODUCTION AND SATISFY GROWING DEMAND WE TURNED INCREASINGLY TO IMPORTS. THE BILL FOR THESE IMPORTS WENT UP EVEN FASTER THAN THEIR VOLUME,

ESPECIALLY IN 1974 WHEN OPEC IMPOSED ITS ENORMOUS PRICE INCREASE. BETWEEN 1973 AND 1977, THE VALUE OF OIL IMPORTS ROSE FROM 11 PERCENT OF TOTAL U.S. IMPORTS TO 29 PERCENT.

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I AM GLAD TO SAY THAT THIS TREND HAS BEEN ARRESTED. INDEED, THE GROWTH IN OUR OIL IMPORTS WAS HALTED IN MID-1977 WITH THE ARRIVAL OF NEW PRODUCTION FROM ALASKA. LOOKING AHEAD, THIS PRODUCTION IS EXPECTED TO RISE SHARPLY IN 1978 AND ENERGY CONSERVATION SHOULD PREVENT OIL CONSUMPTION FROM RISING AS RAPIDLY IN THE FUTURE.

OIL WAS NOT THE ONLY IMPORTED GOOD WHICH ROSE SIGNIFICANTLY DURING OUR ECONOMIC RECOVERY, HOWEVER. IN 1976 THE VOLUME OF NON-PETROLEUM IMPORTS GREW BY 22 PERCENT, AND IN 1977 BY 11 PERCENT. RAPID IMPORT GROWTH IS TO BE EXPECTED DURING A CYCLICAL RECOVERY. BASED ON HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIPS, HOWEVER, WE WOULD EXPECT TO BEGIN TO SEE SOME MODERATION IN THE RAPID PACE OF OUR IMPORT GROWTH IN THE MONTHS AHEAD.

ON THE OTHER HAND, OUR EXPORTS HAVE PERFORMED POORLY DUE IN PART TO THE SLOW ECONOMIC GROWTH OF OUR TRADING PARTNERS. OUR EXPORT WEAKNESS HAS BEEN EXACERBATED BY THE FACT THAT THE DOLLAR APPRECIATED SIGNIFICANTLY FROM 1973 TO 1975 AGAINST MOST OTHER MAJOR CURRENCIES, MAKING U.S. GOODS LESS PRICE COMPETITIVE. AS WE KNOW, TRADE FLOWS RESPOND TO CURRENCY MOVEMENTS WITH A LAG. JUST AS OUR EXPORTS HAVE BEEN BURDENED DURING THE RECOVERY BY EARLIER RISES IN THE DOLLAR'S VALUE, WE WOULD NOW EXPECT EXPORTS TO BEGIN TO SHOW THE BENEFICIAL EFFECTS OF THE RECENT DECLINE IN THAT VALUE.

THE DECLINE OF THE DOLLAR AGAINST CERTAIN CURRENCIES IN RECENT TRADING HAS AROUSED A GOOD DEAL OF CRITICISM. SOME OBSERVERS IN OTHER COUNTRIES SEEM TO FEEL THAT THE UNITED STATES SEEKS UNFAIR ADVANTAGES IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE. I ASSURE YOU THAT WE SEEK NO UNFAIR ADVANTAGE.

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IT IS NOT OUR POLICY TO SEEK A SUSTAINED TRADE SURPLUS. IN FACT, WE BELIEVE THAT SUCH A SURPLUS WOULD IMPOSE A HEAVY BURDEN ON THE WORLD ECONOMY AND WOULD BE INIMICAL TO THE INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES. ON THE OTHER HAND, I AM SURE YOU WILL AGREE THAT OUR TRADE DEFICIT HAS TO BE SHARPLY REDUCED.

IN THIS REGARD, IT SOMETIMES SEEMS AS THOUGH THE CRITICISM OF THE UNITED STATES COMES FROM PEOPLE WHO WANT US TO REDUCE OUR TRADE DEFICIT BUT DO NOT LIKE ANY OF THE

MEANS BY WHICH THIS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED. CONSIDER THE ALTERNATIVES TO THE EXCHANGE RATE ADJUSTMENT THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE.

WE COULD RAISE IMPORT RESTRICTIONS: IMPOSE HIGHER TARIFFS, IMPORT QUOTAS, OR OTHER BARRIERS. THERE ARE, IN FACT, PROTECTIONIST PRESSURES IN THE UNITED STATES TO DO JUST THAT. BUT YOU AND I BOTH KNOW THAT THE POSTWAR PROSPERITY OF THE INDUSTRIAL NATIONS HAS BEEN BUILT ON PROGRESSIVE TRADE LIBERALIZATION. A TURN TOWARD BROAD-SCALE IMPORT CONTROLS WOULD QUICKLY ERASE THE GAINS OF DECADES.

ALTERNATIVELY, WE COULD REDUCE THE TRADE IMBALANCE BY CURTAILING OUR ECONOMIC GROWTH. THIS APPROACH, HOWEVER, WOULD CURB TRADE DEFICITS ONLY AT A HUGE COST IN TERMS OF INCREASED EMPLOYMENT AND A LOSS OF INVESTMENT AND TECHNICAL PROGRESS NEEDED TO KEEP OUR ECONOMY COMPETITIVE IN THE FUTURE. IT WOULD, MOREOVER, INDISCRIMINATELY REDUCE THE EXPORTS OF MOST COUNTRIES TO THE UNITED STATES, WORSENING THE PROSPECTS FOR WORLD ECONOMIC GROWTH.

NEITHER OF THESE OPTIONS IS ATTRACTIVE OR CONSISTENT WITH OUR INTERNATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES. FOR EVERYONE CONCERNED, THE PREFERABLE POLICY FOR CORRECTING OUR DEFICIT
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IS TO PLACE HEAVY RELIANCE ON THE ADJUSTMENTS SET IN MOTION BY THE EXCHANGE RATE SHIFTS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE. WE ARE FURTHER SUPPORTING THIS ADJUSTMENT BY COMPLEMENTARY MEASURES, WHICH I SHALL DISCUSS IN A MOMENT.

IN THIS MANNER WE AVOID CONCENTRATING THE ENTIRE BRUNT OF THE ADJUSTMENT ON MERCHANDISE IMPORTS, AS IMPORT CONTROLS WOULD DO. CAPITAL, MOREOVER, WILL BE ENTICED BACK INTO DOLLARS, BECAUSE THE CHEAPER DOLLAR MAKES INVESTMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES MORE ATTRACTIVE. THIS POLICY IS LESS DISRUPTIVE AND MORE TIMELY THAN DEFLATIONARY POLICIES, WHICH WOULD IMPACT THE ECONOMY INDISCRIMINATELY AND TAKE EFFECT ONLY MONTHS LATER.

I AM CONFIDENT THIS COURSE WILL DO THE JOB MORE QUICKLY AND EQUITABLY. IN THE MEANTIME, THE UNITED STATES STANDS READY TO COUNTER DISORDERLY MARKETS AND LARGE SPECULATIVE MOVEMENTS.

IN LIGHT OF RECENT PRESS COMMENTARY ABOUT THE DOLLAR, IT SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED THAT THE DOLLAR HAS NOT DECLINED NEARLY AS MUCH AGAINST MOST CURRENCIES AS IT HAS AGAINST THE DEUTSCHEMARK, THE SWISS FRANC, AND THE YEN. RECENT

CHANGES HAVE REFLECTED NOT SO MUCH A BROAD DECLINE OF THE DOLLAR AS AN APPRECIATION OF THESE THREE STRONG CURRENCIES AGAINST MOST OTHER CURRENCIES.

LET US TURN NOW TO THE FUTURE.

WHILE THE U.S. TRADE BALANCE FOR THE YEAR AS A WHOLE IS LIKELY TO REMAIN NEAR THE LEVEL OF 1977, I EXPECT THE SECOND HALF OF 1978 TO SHOW AN IMPROVEMENT IN OUR TRADE
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POSITION. I BASE THIS VIEW ON SEVERAL FACTORS:

FIRST, OUR RATE OF GNP GROWTH IS GRADUALLY DECLINING TOWARD ITS LONG-TERM POTENTIAL GROWTH RATE; MEANWHILE, THE ECONOMIC GROWTH OF OUR TRADING PARTNERS IS INCREASING. GERMANY IS TAKING ACTION TO STIMULATE ITS ECONOMY, AND JAPAN ALSO IS TAKING MEASURES TO EXPAND THE GROWTH OF DOMESTIC DEMAND, WHICH HAS BARELY REGAINED ITS 1973 LEVEL.

SECOND, THE DOLLAR'S DECLINE AGAINST SEVERAL MAJOR CURRENCIES SHOULD HELP THE UNITED STATES TO REGAIN A GOOD PART OF THE PRICE COMPETITIVENESS LOST IN 1975. FURTHERMORE, U.S. INDUSTRY AND GOVERNMENT--LED BY THE COMMERCE DEPARTMENT--ARE LAUNCHING A MAJOR NEW EFFORT TO EXPAND OUR EXPORTS.

IN THE PAST, THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN FORTUNATE IN NOT NEEDING TO PLACE A HIGH PRIORITY ON EXPORTS. AS THE WORLD'S LARGEST SINGLE MARKET, WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CONDUCT THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF OUR COMMERCE WITHIN OUR OWN BORDERS. HOWEVER, WITH THE RECENT INCREASES IN OUR IMPORTS, BOTH OIL AND NON-OIL, EXPORTS HAVE BECOME VITALLY IMPORTANT TO US.

IT IS NOW ESSENTIAL THAT AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN MARKET MORE OF THEIR GOODS OUTSIDE U.S. BORDERS. GERMAN BUSINESSMEN HAVE OVER THE YEARS DEVELOPED A KEEN SENSE OF THE VALUE OF EXPORTING; AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN HAVE BEEN INCLINED TO PURSUE SALES WITHIN OUR BOUNDARIES. TO ENCOURAGE AMERICAN

EXPORTERS, WE MUST PROVIDE MORE AND BETTER FINANCING,
DIRECT OUR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES TO EXAMINE WAYS TO ASSIST
EXPORTERS, AND REEXAMINE EXISTING GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS
WITH AN EYE TOWARD ELIMINATING DIRECT AND INDIRECT
IMPEDIMENTS TO EXPORTING.

IN SHORT, WE MUST DEVELOP A NATIONAL EXPORT POLICY.

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THIRD, WE ARE TAKING ACTION TO CONTAIN INFLATION. PRICES
ROSE BY 6 PERCENT IN 1977, DOWN FROM A 9 PERCENT RATE A

FEW YEARS EARLIER. RECENTLY, HOWEVER, TWO FACTORS HAVE
BEEN OPERATING WHICH ARE TENDING TO INCREASE OUR DOMESTIC
RATE OF INFLATION, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY: A SHARP RISE IN
FOOD PRICES IN THE EARLY PART OF 1978, AND THE RECENT
DOLLAR DEPRECIATION.

THE INCREASE IN FOOD PRICES--WHICH ARE THE MOST VOLATILE
COMPONENT OF OUR PRICE INDEXES--WILL SOON RUN ITS COURSE.
BUT TO PREVENT FOOD PRICES AND DOLLAR DEVALUATION FROM
BEING TRANSLATED INTO A BROAD BASED HIGHER RATE OF
INFLATION, THE PRESIDENT IS TAKING STRONG ACTION NOW.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S ANTI-INFLATION PROGRAM REQUIRES THE
COOPERATIVE VOLUNTARY EFFORTS OF BUSINESS, LABOR, AND
GOVERNMENT. THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT THIS WEEK SIGNALS
THE COMMITMENT OF GOVERNMENT TO SET AN EXAMPLE IN
FIGHTING INFLATION. BY HOLDING DOWN THE LEVEL OF GOVERN-
MENT SPENDING AND THE PAY OF FEDERAL WORKERS, THE GOVERN-
MENT WILL REDUCE THE COSTS IT IMPOSES ON THE ECONOMY.
IN ADDITION, THE PRESIDENT WILL MEET PERSONALLY WITH
BUSINESS AND LABOR LEADERS TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF
DECELERATION IN PRICE AND WAGE INCREASES ACROSS THE
BOARD. IN MY OWN DISCUSSIONS WITH MEMBERS OF THE BUSINESS
COMMUNITY, THEY HAVE INDICATED A POSITIVE AND COOPERATIVE
ATTITUDE TOWARDS WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE ADMINISTRATION
IN HOLDING DOWN PRICES.

FINALLY, I AM CONFIDENT OF THE ULTIMATE SUCCESS OF OUR
EFFORTS TO REDUCE U.S. DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OIL. IT

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HAS BEEN A YEAR NOW SINCE PRESIDENT CARTER FIRST PROPOSED
HIS ENERGY PROGRAM. GIVEN THE DIFFICULT AND COSTLY
ADJUSTMENT IT IMPLIES FOR A SOCIETY THAT HAS BEEN GROUNDED
MORE THAN ANY OTHER ON CHEAP ENERGY, IT IS NOT SURPRISING
THAT THE PROGRAM HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF INTENSIVE DEBATE.

HOWEVER, WE RECOGNIZE THE SIGNIFICANCE--TO THE WORLD AS WELL AS TO THE UNITED STATES--OF A PROGRAM TO REDUCE OUR OIL IMPORTS. WE ARE WORKING WITH THE CONGRESS TO GET A SOUND ENERGY BILL ENACTED INTO LAW. PRESIDENT CARTER IS MORE COMMITTED TO AN EFFECTIVE ENERGY PROGRAM THAN TO ANY OTHER NATIONAL OBJECTIVE. WHATEVER NEW POLICY INITIATIVES EMERGE, NO ONE SHOULD OVERLOOK THE PROGRESS ON ENERGY CONSERVATION THAT ALREADY IS TAKING PLACE IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR. MOST IMPORTANT AMONG THESE IS THE PROGRESSIVE REDESIGN OF THE AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE WHICH HAS RAISED THE FUEL EFFICIENCY OF NEW CARS BY ABOUT 70 PERCENT SINCE 1973. GROWTH IN U.S. GASOLINE CONSUMPTION HAS BEEN DRASTICALLY REDUCED, AND WE FORESEE A DECLINE IN

GASOLINE DEMAND IN THE 1980'S.

THUS, DESPITE THE DIFFICULTY IN ADJUSTING TO THE INCREASE IN OIL PRICES AND RECOVERING FROM THE RECESSION THAT FOLLOWED, I BELIEVE THAT WE ARE CURRENTLY PUTTING INTO PLACE POLICIES THAT WILL ENABLE US TO COMPLETE THE TRANSITION.

THE UNITED STATES IS ON A FIRM GROWTH PATH WHICH THIS ADMINISTRATION IS COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING THROUGH PRUDENT BUDGET AND TAX POLICIES. GROWTH RATES AMONG OTHER INDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES ARE IMPROVING THIS YEAR, ALBEIT AT A MODEST PACE. THIS WILL GRADUALLY HELP REDUCE THE U.S. TRADE IMBALANCE. IN ADDITION, RECENT ADJUSTMENTS IN THE VALUE OF THE DOLLAR WILL INCREASE U.S. EXPORTS, WITH A LAG. WE ARE COMMITTED TO A NATIONAL EXPORT POLICY FOR
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THE FIRST TIME IN U.S. HISTORY. AND FINALLY, WE ARE MARSHALLING OUR GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO DEAL WITH DOMESTIC INFLATION.

OUR ECONOMIC POLICIES ARE DESIGNED TO MEET OUR RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA. I AM CONFIDENT THAT OTHER COUNTRIES ARE ALSO WILLING TO DO THEIR SHARE; INDEED ACTIONS ALREADY TAKEN BY MANY COUNTRIES ARE HELPING TO MOVE US IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. WE MUST NOT LOSE THIS MOMENTUM.

2. THIS SPEECH SHOULD BE EMBARGOES UNTIL JUST PRIOR TO DELIVERY.

3. STATE DEPARTMENT COMMENTS AND POSSIBLE CHANGES WILL FOLLOW. VANCE

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